

California Legislature

July 8, 1999

Ms. Mary Nichols
Secretary of the Resources Agency
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Secretary Nichols:

Our constituents have brought to our attention significant water supply and water quality concerns that developed in recent days because of the extremely low rate of water export at the Tracy and Banks pumping plants. We understand that the crisis resulted from the response to unforeseen behavior on the part of a portion of the Delta smelt population, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act.

We understand the most recent monitoring shows Delta smelt are not threatened by operation of the federal and state Delta pumps. As a result, pumping increased with the goal, barring unforeseen circumstances, to restore project operations by the end of this week. We appreciate the collaborative efforts that led to this decision. We urge you to support continued adjustments on the supply side of the equation. Such measures, when combined with extraordinary demand and operational measures taken by contractors and operators for both the State and Federal projects may, in the short run, avert the most severe impacts.

The significant reduction in pumping rates and increased demand could result in water levels in San Luis Reservoir becoming dangerously low in August. This would have a significant adverse impact on many Californians – including both farmers growing crops in the San Joaquin Valley, and municipal and industrial users in the Los Angeles area and in 'Silicon Valley.'

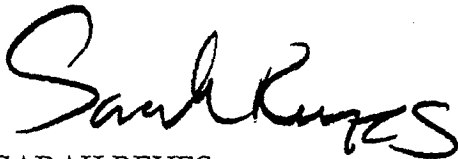
The fact that some of the largest urban, agricultural and industrial areas of the state faced with a water supply crisis during one of the wettest years in a decade raises serious questions about future water supply reliability.

As you know, the current situation is largely the result of water supply reductions mandated by the Department of the Interior under the authority of the ESA and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act. If the Department of the Interior's policies for implementing these laws can produce a serious water supply shortage in a wet year, we must be concerned about what will happen during the dry years that are certain to come.

Therefore, we believe that it is vital that every effort is made to help recover water storage and that actions are implemented to avoid yet another, perhaps more severe problem later this season and in future years. In fact, such an effort known as the Environmental Water Account (EWA) has been under development within the CALFED process and was originally slated for implementation this year. The EWA would have substantially reduced or even eliminated the potential water supply impacts we now face. We urge you to work with us and our constituents to ensure that Delta exports for agriculture and municipal and industrial users are made reliable through innovative programs such as the EWA.

Again thank you for your help with this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you.

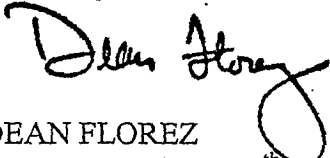
Sincerely,



SARAH REYES
Assemblymember, 31st District



JIM COSTA
Senator, 16th District



DEAN FLOREZ
Assemblymember, 30th District

Cc: Governor Gray Davis